sweet on you

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by spacebricks

Summary

“One vertical fin and one rudder completely gone. A hole in the wing nearly 16 feet long. I could kiss you Cleven”, John breathed out once their tailwheels touched the landing strip.

Buck laughed, removing his oxygen mask. “Yeah?”, but the look Bucky gave him made him want to put it back on again.

Chapter 1: une

The first time Buck flew a mission with John next to him in the cockpit he tasted bile at the back of his throat for a week. It wasn't because the engine became starved, or because the left wing began to drag so hard he kept smashing his cheek against the window pane.

No. When Bucky was there the cockpit felt cramped. Suddenly there were too many things to control and adjust. The instrumental panel became a nightmare. John kept looking at Buck's fumbling hands like they belonged to a stranger. A stranger who couldn't fly a bloody B-17.

But the truth was, Buck had never had someone he cared about enough in his plane. Correction, he had watched a lot of men he cared about die under his jurisdiction as pilot in command. But never someone whose death would colour his world so grey it'd become damn nearly not worth inhabiting.

"One vertical fin and one rudder completely gone. A hole in the wing nearly 16 feet long. I could kiss you Cleven", John breathed out once their tailwheels touched the landing strip.

Buck laughed, removing his oxygen mask, "yeah?", but the look Bucky gave him made him want to put it back on again.

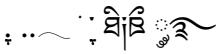
John smiled at him in that private kid-like way, it reached the creases of his eyes, and it reached the centrefold of Buck's heart. John leaned over to swipe at a bit of blood beneath Buck's eye, gentle, calloused fingers.

"Yeah", Bucky replied plainly, sweetly, meaning nothing and everything by it.

“Never took you for a romantic Eagen”, Buck finally smiled sincerely at him. Then he laughed that golden laugh. Bucky thought he really could have kissed him then.

Instead, he opted to open the door and shriek loudly at the oncoming jeeps, jumping down and asking who was going to make him a stiff drink.

Gale just watched the spectacle. He hated spectacles personally, but oh how he loved to watch John make them.



An English dusk drew in over the barracks as the chimney swifts retreated for the night. The evening brought the warm glow of a local pub, the sour taste of whiskey and the acrid burn of one too many Old Golds as John exhaled all over Buck’s face.

Buck shoved him, laughing fondly. He truly looked relaxed, but John could see something at the back of his eyes.

Relief.

There was no telling that they’d both be sat here this evening on scratchy, garish seats in a crowded, village pub, thighs pressed impossibly close together. Gale, pretending to enjoy an Old Fashioned, leant back in the far corner of the sofa, with John beside him, constantly jostling him with his sudden laughter, lunging forwards across the table, engaging Curt in some ridiculous bet.

Not that Gale was ever really the life of the party, but John noticed him grow quieter than usual and moved to recline into the sofa behind him, noting too late Gale's outstretched arm, suddenly making their position all too intimate.

He shifted forwards awkwardly before twisting his whole body to face Buck. There was this kind of intricately patterned, frosted glass border around their booth which had been keeping Gale occupied for the past 15 minutes, but now he fixed his eyes on John.

"Yes?" Gale enquired, giving him his best false dour expression, a smile playing at the corner of his lips.

"Doing a lot of thinking there Major", John brought a hand up to rest on Buck's shoulder in a friendly pat.

"Don't hurt yourself".

Pointedly, Buck's eyes flicked down to where John's hand rested, then drew back up with a raised brow.

"I'm going to call it a night", he replied, bringing the crystal glassware to his lips.

Bucky snorted in response.

"Don't pretend to drink that Buck", John snipped with a grin, his hand drawing lazy circles on Buck's shoulder.

“It’s unbecoming”, he continued.

With that Gale really laughed.

Distantly John heard Brady joke that Gale was sweet on him. Nash laughed hysterically at that, joining in and commenting something along the lines of ‘I’d just about suggest Bucky was sweet on him too’.

“Okay we call it a night”, John slurred, glancing around at the other guys in the booth. Buck really hadn’t meant for John to disband his merry making but he couldn’t pretend he wasn’t happy, already looking forward to the cool, sobering (well sobering for John), walk back to the barracks.

Bucky said his goodbyes. Curt had said he’d be joining them soon. Blakely and Nash had made to leave with them but become embroiled in an elaborate drinking game.

“G’night then fellas”, Gale ushered John out of the pub as he stumbled over chair legs and made eyes at some hapless girl near the door. Buck took his thumb and forefinger to the bridge of his nose, closing his eyes in disbelief as John knocked over the entirety of someone’s drink.

The stars in Norfolk were something.

“You got a light Cleven?”, the breeze whistled around them so loudly that Buck didn’t even hear what John, who was lolloping several paces behind, had said.

But Bucky had brought out his dad’s little silver tin and so Gale got his inflection, tossing him a lighter he carried for god knows what reason.

Once John had caught up with him he slung an arm around his middle before realising the miscalculation and moving it to rest around Gale's shoulders.

"I don't want to sleep yet", John said to the inky sky.

"What am I s'pose to do about that John?" Gale drawled, shooting him a bemused look.

"Play Bridge with me till we fall asleep?" John half jutted out his bottom lip in an entirely unmanly way, his eyes grew wide and pleading.

Gale ran a hand through his own wind swept hair.

"After today", he began, stopping in his tracks, lost in a memory, then meeting John's eyes with an intense and heartfelt expression.

"Well I think I'd probably do just about anything for ya", he mumbled.

He didn't really know why he was saying all of this. Surely the few sips of his drink in the pub hadn't made him go this gooey.

No, it was something else.

John laughed at that with glee, flashing a full toothy smile before pressing down on Gale's shoulders and jumping, trying to summit the

stars.

Gale huffed as he brought his arms back to secure him before he dropped clumsily to the ground.

“You’re ridiculous John”.

Chapter 2: ain't a major always gotta finish the job?

Chapter Summary

> Back at the barracks, Bucky needs a little help getting out of his uniform. Gale is there to oblige.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Bucky fumbled with the door as he opened up the barracks.

Quiet, they were alone.

He catapulted himself toward Gale's bed, landing on a small package wrapped in brown paper with string tied across it in a neat little bow. He shot Gale a quizzical look.

'Just something that came from Marge today', Gale replied curtly.

'Muss be nice', Bucky slurred, flopping onto his back. He squinted his eyes at her rounded handwriting, holding the parcel up above him before carefully placing it to one side.

'You'll find a good girl soon John', Gale assured gently, his tone entirely too fond for the topic of conversation. He leaned against an opposite white, rickety, bed frame, and watched as John's gaze tracked him across the room.

'You think?' John replied earnestly, standing up and beginning to fiddle with his shoulder straps in an attempt to shrug them off,

swaying to the left slightly.

Gale eyed his difficulty unclipping them from his belt and took a few steps forward, coughing under his breath and slowly extending a hand to help. John sighed, letting his arms fall to his sides in annoyance.

Gale abandoned John’s half-falling-off garters, instead gently working his hands under the hem of the seal brown leather jacket that enveloped his frame, the feel of horsehide comforting under his touch. He unpinned John’s insignia, fastened characteristically lopsided, and uncurled his wool wristlets, placing them on the night stand, along with his flight gloves.

Buck reached up cautiously to unhook the suspenders from the metal D rings adorning John’s shoulders, tender fingers working the cold alloy till they clinked to the floor.

‘Sure’, Gale smiled his warm, golden smile, choosing not to leave John’s question hanging, hiding concern beneath his assured facade.

‘Somehow I don't think I will’, Bucky sighed, moving his fingers back up to begin unbuttoning his drab olive shirt, now crumpled and unpressed.

Gale batted his hands away affectionately and pulled John closer by the shirt buttons to get a better angle. Gale could smell the alcohol on his breath.

John, subdued, made a little huffing noise and tried to meet Gale’s eyes.

‘You will’, Buck’s smile faded, swallowing thickly as he moved to unhook the last button.

He stood back then, as John slouched against the end of the bed, hip slightly popped to one side, shirt undone, glowering at Gale rather hollowly as if refusing to take the shirt off himself.

Buck’s tentative hands moved to peel Bucky’s shirt up and over his broad shoulders.

‘How can you be sure?’, Bucky snorted incredulously.

Conflicted, Gale chose against providing a gratuitously revealing character reference and settled on;

‘Let's just say you don’t polish up badly…’ he chuckled, conscious of the weight of his comment and the proximity of John’s naked chest, adding, ‘good head of hair on you’, in an attempt to lighten the tension.

John almost looked shy, but his faux machismo returned all too quickly like a shield.

‘Charm’, Buck added quietly like an afterthought, acutely aware of the fact he seemed to be frozen, eyes cast to the floor as Norfolk’s silvery crescent outlined every imperfection (or lack thereof) on the taller man in front of him, now cocking his head to the side with a growing smirk.

‘Broads don’t see me how you see me Cleven’, John replied lazily, almost unintelligibly, retrieving a cigarette from his trouser pocket

and lighting it with a chink of his Zippo.

Gale hummed, eyebrows shooting up, moving a hand to brush through his hair awkwardly.

‘How’s that Bucky?’ he licked his lips as a nervous laugh escaped from deep within his chest.

Bucky stilled from his swaying, straightening up and inhaling the bitter taste of tobacco he so desperately needed to sober him up. Gale’s eyes burned with the exhalation of smoke.

‘Contrary to public opinion I don’t regard myself that highly’, Bucky coughed a little as he said it, eyes darting around Gale’s face as he felt the alcohol pulse through him, whooshing sounds filling his head.

‘But sometimes you look at me like’, he looked down, gesturing with his hands abstractly before continuing, ‘like I’m more important than this whole god damn air base’, he laughed at himself then, playing it off like a joke.

‘Like you’d fight tooth and nail just for people to understand where I’m coming from’, he added, drawing his eyes up to meet Buck’s as they bore into him.

‘I don’t get it… and, and, it’s funny because…’, he padded to the window across the barracks and pulled the curtain aside to reveal the moon in its entirety.

‘Half the time I don’t think you even know’, he twisted his whole body, looking back at Buck almost sympathetically, like he was the

fool in this conversation.

'Where it is I am coming from…', he finished, tapping his cigarette on the window pane as the ashes fell to the floor in the way he knew Gale hated.

Gale rolled his eyes. 'Why do you have to be so goddamn esoteric all the time Egen?'

John smiled at that.

'S'what I'm saying. No point defending a man that makes no sense!' John interrupted, putting his hands up in faux surrender.

Buck laughed, eyes hazy from exhaustion, finally shifting to take off his own jacket and sit down on his bunk.

'What happened to undressing me?' John interjected, voice dripping with mirth as he stood by the window in just his trousers, all argentine skin and sharply defined lines broken up by red scratches and bandages.

Gale scoffed in an attempt to masquerade his increasing heart rate.

'Ain't a major always gotta finish the job?' John breathed out a little stiffly as he looked down to the slacks in question.

Gale followed his eyes before crossing the floor to John dotingly, slowly placing one knee on the floor in front of John, eyes flicking

upwards, before settling the other down too.

John willed his mind not to venture into the unknown (or if he was being honest- the known), as Gale looked up at him, hair disheveled from the windy walk back home and the pub humidity, stubble creeping across his upper lip in a light shadow, mouth parted and eyes boundlessly adoring, fatigued but unwavering in their determination to study their subject.

Bony fingers and blackened fingernails found John's belt, folding the leather between his fingers as he worked it loose, before moving to his zipper. He pulled it ever so gently, as if since John had aligned the task with military obligation, Buck could openly take reverie in the action.

Buck moved his hands up to John's hips, eyes avoidant now. They were cold and John hissed, flinching out of the touch.

Buck brought his knuckles to his mouth and blew on them a couple of times before returning them to John's sides and sliding them down to meet the top of his trousers.

So gentle.

'Keep your hands there Cleven', John whispered, so quietly Gale could have missed it. His eyes shot up to find John closing his, and resting his head against the glass behind him.

Slowly, Gale pulled the cotton pants below John's hips, eyes concentrated on the slacks as they fell to his feet.

‘And… k-keep your eyes on me’, Bucky stuttered, cigarette long forgotten at his side and burnt down to the filter.

Buck pretended not to hear, wishing his position and John’s words weren’t affecting him so, but he was shifting uncomfortably in his slacks, trying to discreetly readjust himself where he knelt.

‘There’, Gale said through a rather laboured breath. ‘You can step out of them now’. And John did, leaving him in just his briefs and socks.

Neither of them moved, Gale with one knee raised now, frozen in an attempt to get up, and John looking down at him wildly.

Eyes watery, Bucky reached a palm out to touch Gale’s hair softly where it curled behind his ear, willing him to stay there. Gale couldn’t help the way his eyes fluttered shut, time suspended.

‘Don’t John’, Gale warned gently, as he rose to stand fully this time. Now at eye level, Buck just stared down the older man, for seconds that felt like minutes, before turning on his heel and sitting down on his own bed to unlace his boots. Bucky just stood there like a scolded dog.

‘Go to bed Bucky’, was the last word Gale uttered before undressing himself in record time. He closed the curtains in one vexed motion, pulling the covers of his bed back and slipping underneath them, glueing his eyes shut and willing his brain to think about something, anything else, other than the man in bed next to him.

Chapter End Notes

> Thank you for reading and sorry this is being updated so late! I originally planned to add another chapter but after realising I cannot write smut for the life of me… I honestly might just leave it here <3 As always feedback is adored!

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